



Baby Shoes

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TOOLS:

- [Cutting board \(1\)](#)
- [Embroidery scissors \(1\)](#)
- [Hammer \(1\)](#)
ideally with a round face to avoid damaging leather.
- [Hole punch \(1\)](#)
Such as the Mini Leather Punch (michaels.com) or the 1/16" Craftool Drive Punch (tan-dyleatherfactory.com).
- [Hook tool \(1\)](#)
- [Pick \(1\)](#)
or scratch awl.
- [Scissors \(1\)](#)
- [Sewing machine \(1\)](#)
- [X-Acto knife \(1\)](#)
Use a new, sharp blade.

PARTS:

- [Leather \(1\)](#)
The optimal thickness/weight for each piece: Sole and insole: 3/32"-1/8" (3oz-3½oz). Uppers: 1/16"-3/16" (1oz-3oz). Toe piece and lining: no more than 1/16" (1oz). Ankle piece: 1/16"-3/16" (1oz-3oz) but you must be able to skive, or scrape thin slices off.
- [Sponge \(1\)](#)
1/8"-3/16" thick for cushioning around heels.
- [Glass surface \(1\)](#)
or marble slab for skiving.
- [Soft glue \(1\)](#)
such as rubber cement, for a temporary hold.
- [Hard glue \(1\)](#)
such as contact cement, for a permanent hold.
- [Brush \(1\)](#)
for the glue. A thinning agent helps to keep the brush clean.
- [Lighter \(1\)](#)
- [Needle \(1\)](#)
Round-tip needle for cross-stitching.
- [Velcro \(1\)](#)
The adhesive-backed kind is easy to use.
- [Waxed nylon thread \(1\)](#)
or artificial sinew.
- [Metallic pen \(1\)](#)
Silver and/or gold pen. Try the Uni-ball Cool Impact, which comes off easily. Use

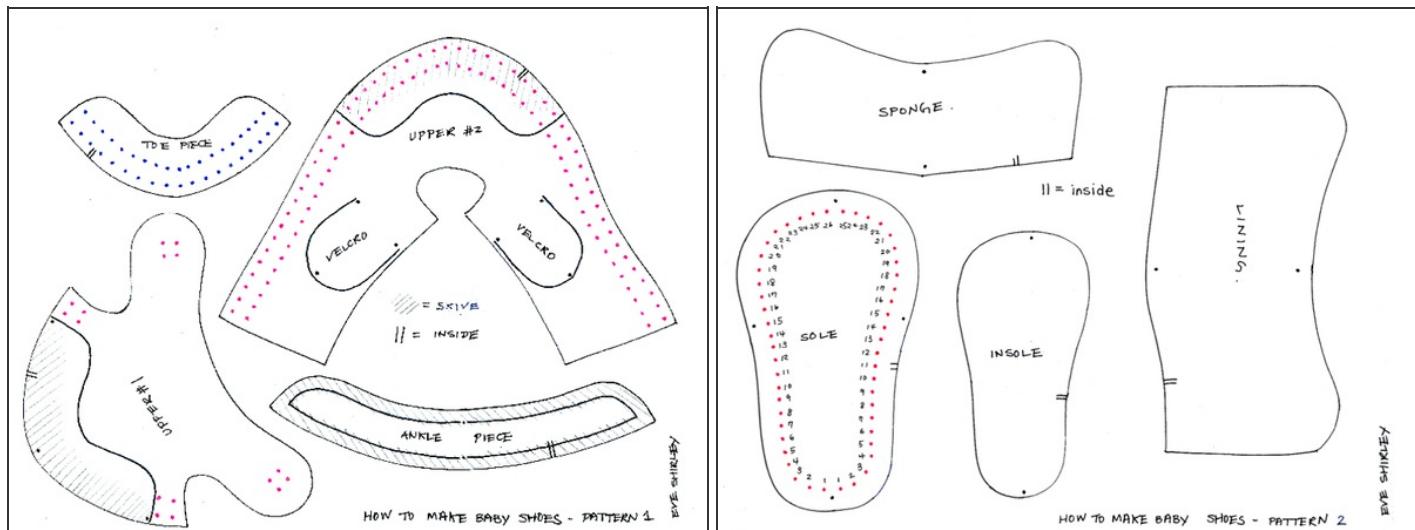
Over impact, which comes off easily. Use silver for darker leather and gold for lighter leather.

SUMMARY

A good pair of shoes gives us the opportunity to strike the fine balance between great design and function — and that goes for baby shoes, too. Babies' feet are soft and flexible, so they can be squeezed into almost any shoe. But because their little bone structures are still taking shape, it's not a good idea to force their spongy little piggies into hard-shelled receptacles.

The shoes I've designed here, for babies between the ages of 6 and 14 months, have just the right amount of structure to support the feet, but still allow them a wide range of motion. The leather supports comfortably and breathes naturally. And the Velcro flaps and big openings make getting them on and off fuss-free.

Step 1 — Prepare the pattern.



- Download the 2 patterns under Files above.
- Print out 2 copies of the pattern. Use one as a guide (set aside for later) and the other as an actual pattern. Using the punch and hammer, punch out all the dots on the pattern.

Step 2 — Cut leather and sponge.



- Place pattern pieces on the appropriate thicknesses of leather. Trace all outlines and holes using the silver or gold pen. Make sure to mark the center and inside edge (II = inside edge) of each piece because it can be hard to distinguish left from right once they're all cut out.
- The patterns are created just for the left side of each piece. Flip them and repeat the steps to complete the right side.
- Cut the traced pieces using your X-Acto knife. For outlines, it's better to cut along the inside of the line rather than on or outside the line.
- Cut the sponge in the same manner.

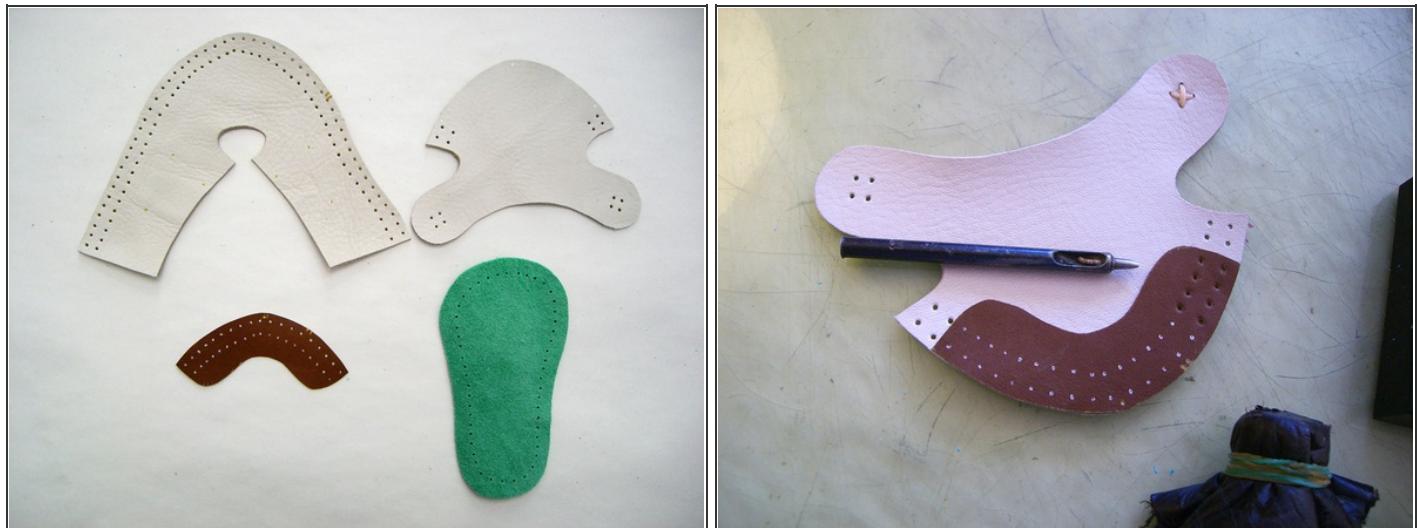


Step 3 — Skive the leather.



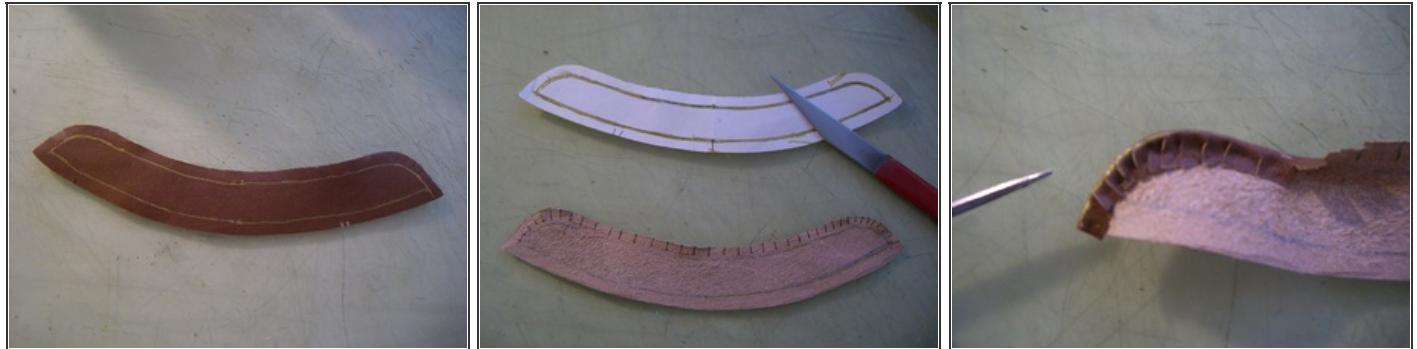
- Skiving means thinning leather in order to make it easier to stitch. Since the machine that can do this is prohibitively expensive, we'll skive by hand using a knife.
- Following the diagram, trace the inner line of the pattern onto the leather. Skive the ankle piece on all edges. The topside will need to be folded later, so the end should be paper-thin. The bottom piece will simply be glued and stitched, so you should skive to about half of the starting thickness.
- There will be a total of 4 layers at the toe area on the final product. Depending on the thickness of your leather, it may become very stiff to stitch. Skive the area with the crossed line on the pattern (uppers 1 and 2) down to about 2/3 or 1/2 of the starting thickness.

Step 4 — Punch holes.



- Follow the guide pattern, and punch out all the red dots.
- Apply hard glue on the back of the toe piece and on upper 1 where the toe piece will be placed.
- Wait until glue is completely dry on each piece, then attach and glue pieces together.
- Punch out the holes on the toe piece (the blue dots).

Step 5 — Fold the leather.



- Trace the erased inner line again on the back and the front.
- Using the knife, make tiny slits, roughly evenly spaced, around the top edge, but closer together around the corners.
- Lightly apply the soft glue, wait until it dries, then start folding the flaps along the inner line using an awl. The soft glue is forgiving, so you can easily detach and try again.

Step 6 — Fold the leather, continued.



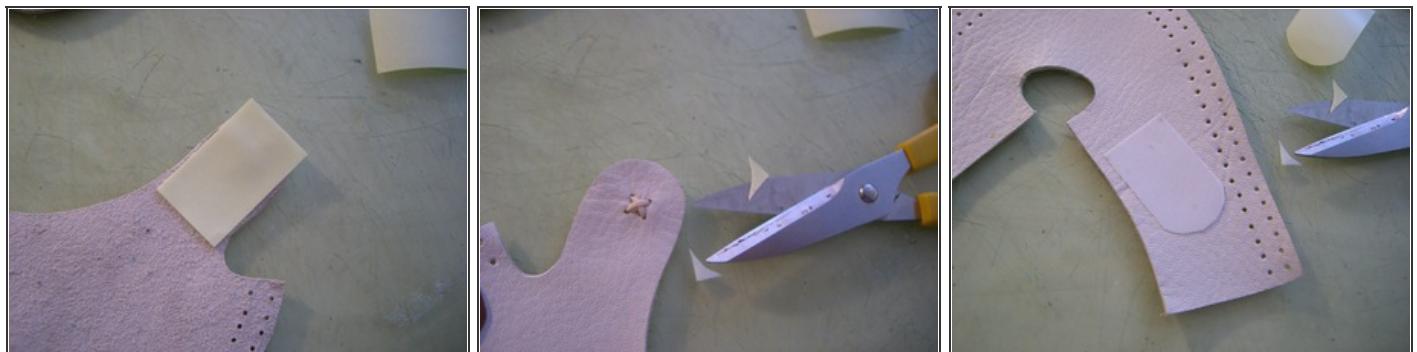
- Hammer down the edge to make it flat.
- For the sponge, apply the hard glue on all edges. Wait until it's dry, then poke down the middle with the awl and squeeze both ends together to make a tapered edge.

Step 7 — Add an accent.



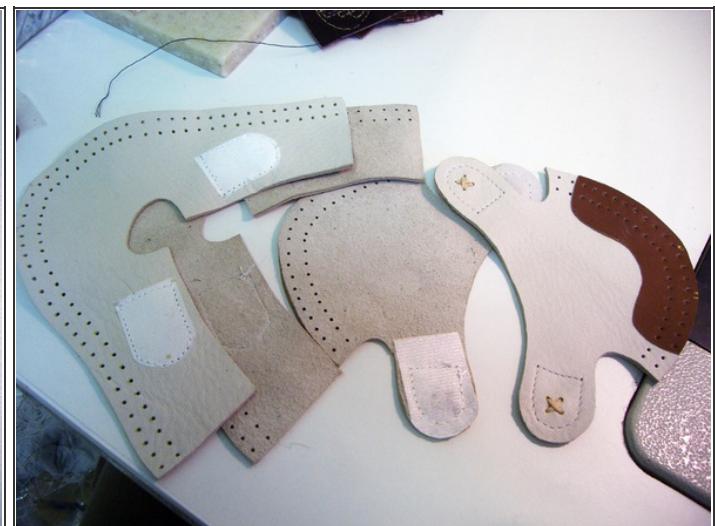
- Using the same thread as you will for the final stitching, stitch a cross at the flap. Go through twice, just to add a little volume, if you choose. Or you can sew on a small button or other customized design. Have fun with it! If you choose the cross, make a tight knot 2 times and cut the thread, leaving about 1/4" on both ends.
- Using the lighter, burn the ends of the thread. The wax and the nylon thread will start to melt. Quickly blow out the flame and hammer down the end to squish it and make one glob. You'll do the same thing for the final stitching as well.

Step 8 — Attach the Velcro.



- For each shoe, cut 2 lengths of Velcro tape 1 3/8" long, with the hook sides and loop sides still fastened together. Peel off the adhesive backing (or apply glue if the Velcro doesn't have adhesive) on the loop (soft) sides and attach them to the 2 flaps on upper 1.
- Shape the tape with scissors, then pull off the hook (hard) sides and attach them to upper 2 where it is marked.

Step 9 — Attach the Velcro, continued.



- On the reverse side of the leather, mark where you'll stitch the Velcro with a semi-sharp tool like the back of a knife or scissors. Then sew all 4 Velcro pieces onto the leather.
- After each sewing, pull the front thread through to the back side and tie two knots (see Figure TK). Carefully burn the knot with the lighter to make a very tiny melted knot.

Step 10 — Sew the pieces together.



- Start with the heels. Put them together inside out, and sew the very edge. Be careful not to sew over the holes at the end!
- Turn them right-side out and hammer along the stitched line to flatten the edge.
- To sew the ankle piece, flip over the upper you've just sewn and lightly apply hard glue to the top edge. Also lightly apply hard glue to the bottom edge of the ankle piece. Wait until completely dry, then attach the 2 pieces together, starting from the center (should be marked with a silver dot) and working out to the sides. Sew along the edge.
- Sew the lining and the toe piece. Flip upper 2 inside out. Lightly apply soft glue on the backside of upper 2 and the lining. Wait until it's dry, then put the 2 pieces together, starting from the center and working out to the sides. Flip them back and sew along the edge, starting from the beginning of the ankle piece to the end. Sew the toe piece along the edge.
- I put these two together to minimize changing the thread. These are the last stitches that require brown thread for the top and white for the bottom.



Step 11 — Attach the sponge.



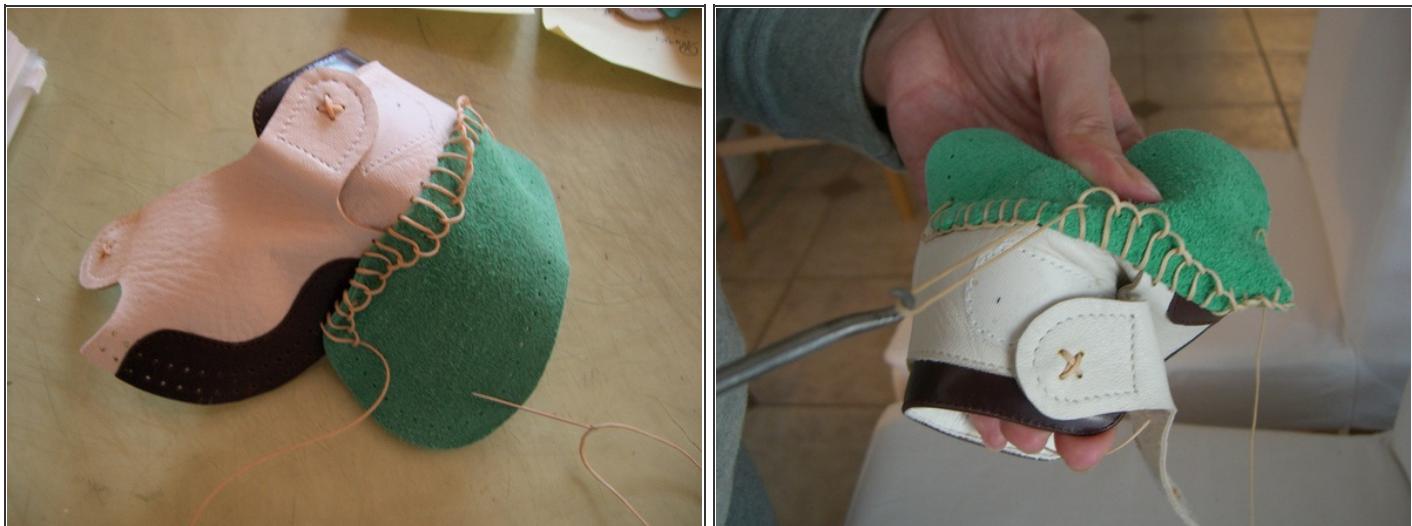
- Detach the lining and upper where they were just glued, and reapply soft glue on the back of the upper and front of the sponge piece. Wait until it's dry and carefully place the sponge, starting at the top center and working out to the sides. It may be difficult at first and the sponge may seem too short, but it should fit right into both edges after a couple of tries.
- You can also start this step by turning the piece inside out, but turn it over immediately after attaching the sponge at the center. Because of the radius of the thickness, the sponge will seem much too short if placed inside out!
- Glue the lining, making sure to glue the bottom near the holes.
- Punch holes in the lining. Follow the holes on the upper, and simply re-punch where the existing holes are. Be careful not to punch over the sewn thread!
- Using the nipper, carefully cut out any excess lining from the top, and below the upper.

Step 12 — Stitch the shoe together.



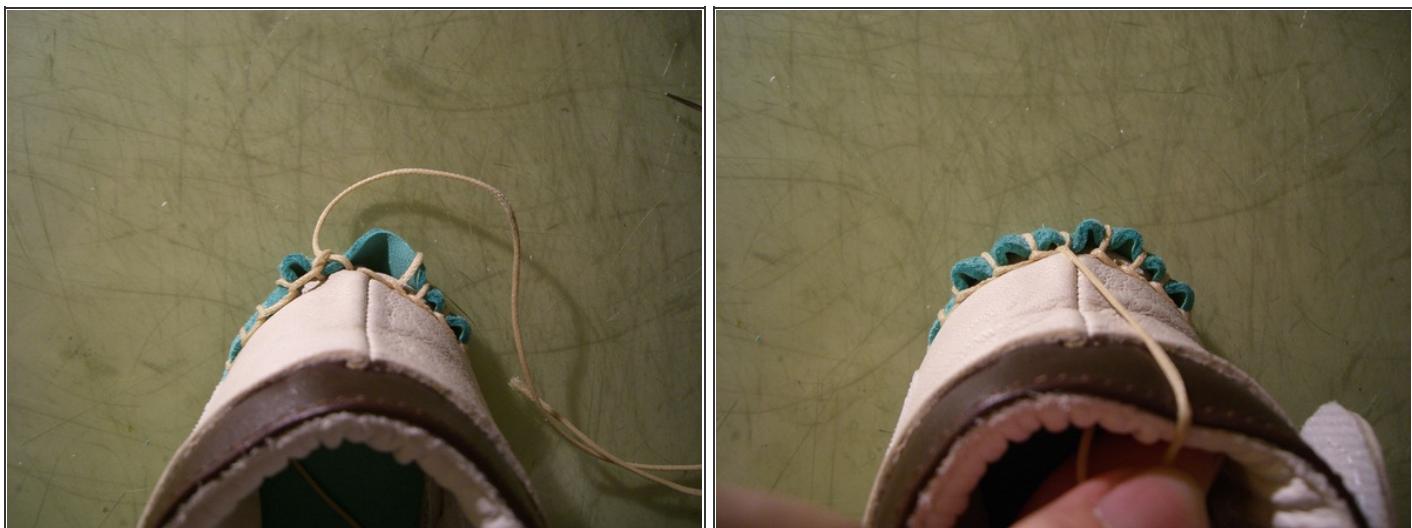
- The final pieces are: upper 1, upper 2, sole, and insole.
- Cut wax thread (or artificial sinew) to 72". Using a blanket stitch, start at the top hole on the right side of the heel, inside to out. Leave about 5" of thread (so that you can pull it by hand later).
- Go from the bottom sole to bottom hole to upper hole, and wrap around the thread. Repeat the steps to hole 14.
- At hole 15 (which should be marked with a silver dot), begin stitching upper 1. Repeat the same steps but simply place upper 1 in between the sole and upper 2.
- After adding upper 1, you may not be able to do the entire stitch in one go as shown in the diagram. Don't worry — just stitch 1 hole at a time. It might get a bit confusing, especially when the thread is long; just focus on the order of the stitch.

Step 13 — Stitch the shoe together, continued.



- Don't worry if the stitches are loose. Stitch to about halfway, then start tightening the thread with the hook tool.

Step 14 — Stitch the shoe together, continued.



- When tightened, the top part of the thread should sit right around the edge of sole. After stitching all around, the sole may be uneven. If so, use the needle to make an even crease.
- Finish off stitching where the first thread came out. Both threads should end inside the shoe. Pull both ends tightly as you flip the shoe inside out, just enough to expose the ends (you don't have to turn the shoe entirely).
- As you did with the accent on the flap, make 2 tight knots and cut off the thread, leaving about 1/4" on each end. Carefully burn the ends using the lighter and quickly blow the flame out before it reaches the knot. While still hot, hammer down the end to make one glob of knot.

Step 15 — Attach the insole.



- There are 2 ways to glue the insole. You can glue the front half of the insole and the shoe, then do the back half.
- Or, you can slowly turn the entire shoe inside out and do it in one shot. Always wait until the glue on each piece is completely dry, then attach. Use hard glue for a permanent hold.

This project first appeared in [CRAFT Volume 07](#), pages 55-61.

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